Readings in Social Thought: THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV
Mr. Bloom and Mr. Bellow
Autumn Quarter 1991

October 1

Dostoevsky (D) is now a declining taste. His works used to be great as an influence on the character of college students. (Life of feeling as a distinction.) A special kind of suffering marked these "martyrs" - the feeling of being despised by everyone.

Fyodor Karamazov's (FK) clownishness is vanity on a level with Woody Allen. "I'm a fool and I know it; you're all fools but you don't know it." (There was a cult of this "authenticity" in America in pre-WW2 and after.) FK got sensual delight from receiving insults. This is the opposite of gentlemanliness - contrast him with Julien Sorel. There is no thought in FK of defending himself against detractors, instead he tries to drag those who insult him down to his level. *Mr. Bellow here suggested Falstaff as a being comparable to FK.* Falstaff is comparable but is different because he is not ashamed of his ignobility and plays an intellectual game with Prince Hal. FK is a type of "force of nature". Lives very much in others' opinions of himself. Examine his exchange with Miusov at the monastery. Miusov is dragged down.

The anti-Westernism of D is now very topical. According to D, the transplantation of western ideas damage Russia - atheism, Romanticism. He calls for a return of some nationalism. In the face of cosmopolitanism, D appealed to the latent taste for rootedness in his readers. His nationalism has a kinship with fascism. D's anti-Westernism appealed to Americans, but , at the same time, we were atheists and Marxists, so we sent a confused message to the world about our convictions.

Rousseau's religion is so much more humane and universalistic. D's is powerful and creepy. Look at the Voltaire joke retold by the devil in Ivan Karamazov's (IK) nightmare; in Voltaire it is high comedy told in a polite milieu, but in this book it is told to shock and repel. This is an instance of how D

transforms the Western character to meet his criticism of it.

D's characters are shameless people. They arise from the notion of "authenticity", i.e. the worst thing about you is the truest. This idea is linked to the Christian notion of confession. Contrast this idea with Aristotle who writes that a truly good man does not feel conscience, whereas in D and in Christianity **everyone** must recognize original sin and the very flawed nature of **all** men, even the best.

The religious aspect of the book was not taken seriously by Mssr.s Bloom's and Bellow's generation. Marx and Freud had "handled" the religious problem. Religion was the opiate of the masses...the religious strain of the novel was simply considered false. Nietzsche read D fervently because D explains the despair of confronting the possibility that there is no God. The possibility that there is no God meant something to D and to many Russians, whereas it had ceased to mean anything to most Westerners in the late 19th c. D's works represented an anti-bourgeois longing to go beneath the veneer of sociality. And yet the book is not a strong reaffirmation of faith. (This was new in the novel - effects through feelings and acute observations. Not a well-made novel.)

The book is a statement against European polish. Represents a break with Romanticism; there is no real love story in the book. This was the beginning of the end of love and marriage as critical themes of novels. (D took up national problems and character: what Russia is about as opposed to being an art novel.) It was a truly popular novel with a good murder story.

To what extent did D consider himself as communicating with Russians? (Represents urban intellectual Russia.) (Mr. Grene: He certainly had the West in mind when he wrote the book.) These late 19th c. novels took inspiration from real news stories (Flaubert, Tolstoy, Stendhal) whereas classical literature used the well-known stories of well-known men.

Further contrast D with these other authors: there are no civilities in D - it's all raw - there is no element of *politesse* left. (Manners are considered merely social.) The book is intense in an odd way. Tolstoy remains close to the conventions of Romanticism, but in D the elements of love are no longer grounded

on chastity or the longing for **one** great love, etc. (D's is the Romanticism of doomed characters.) I can't imagine a Romantic music for D, whereas Tolstoy loved Tchaikovsky. Miusov prides himself for having been involved in the Paris Revolution of 1848, but still owned 1,000 serfs. Miusov is a set up - a compendium of thin Western characteristics. There is not much under his Parisian polish. Too easy - there is no real case made for the West in this character - he is just a frog. (Is this didacticism?) Think of Julien Sorel's desire to be like Napoleon. Napoleon is conspicuously left out of this novel and would not be considered worthy of emulation. D's characters have no model, what have they got? The characters are individuals in so far as they feel strongly and are opinionated. Strong personalities mark each character.

October 8

(The Karamazov character. What is the ascertainable quality of this type?) Their utter lack of self-respect in revealing their ugliness. The quest for shame and humiliation is unique to their type in literature. (Nothing like this in Tolstoy or Dickens.) The quest for degradation as **the** form of self-expression. *Mr. Bellow suggests that there is a character in TROILUS AND CRESSIDA who says, "I am envy." who is somehow near this low type.* Instead that character is concentrated malice. FK and that Shakespeare character are different expressions of (*eine natur*) a force of nature, but are similar in their desire to be beaten. Theirs is an uncontrollable, painful seeking for degradation.

Psychology is the primary ground of the novel. These are pure types. FK is a sort of id. FK represents the extreme all the brothers are trying to avoid - his blasphemy and extreme indulgence in sex and money. Each is, in his way, a chip off the old block. The Karamazovs are not a family. They all loathe FK. They all loathe his extremism. Dmitri (DK) is trying to differentiate his sensuality from his father's. IK is trying to be a rationalist. FK brings out the Karamazov religious, sexual,

and financial humiliation. Every character has some kind of relationship to God. (Extremism is not the leading characteristic. DK is extraordinarily different. Only FK has the desire to make himself abject and disgusting.) His buffoonery is the lead characteristic. The degradation of man in the face of God and taking seriously the notion of man's sinfulness. "You're all hypocrites, I'm the only one who is true."

The theme: God is everything or there's nothing. The various forms of relationship to God are everything. Pan-Slavism is an addition, but Christianity is the absolute theme. For skeptics the higher motives to behavior really don't exist. (D's religion is accessible to all; says all people have insight into the greatest things.) The longing for a connection with God was very important.

A discussion here occurred about the narrator and narrative style. D does not create ambiguities about characters. All of the characters are ordinary people (*that is, they're not aristocrats or public figures*), but they are out-sized. These are real personalities. There is no lack of necessities, no lack of money, etc. Rather, the characters have psychological necessities, they must quarrel, must share the same sexual object. They are like classic heroes in that they have only the impulse of their freedom in leading them to these things - leading from one fantastic scene to the next.

Is FK happy or unhappy? "If there is not God, everything is permitted." This conclusion is understood as unhappy. What is FK's role in the question of the existence of God? His happiness is in being surrounded by so many believers. He takes pleasure in going beyond others' limits. Is this related to his buffoonery? Does he enjoy his sexual life? *Mr. Grene thinks not. Mr. Bloom says yes, but then reconsiders and says probably not.* The old man (FK) is what we really are according to D. At the center of his soul is the opinion of others. He has an extreme sensitivity to this opinion - he recognizes his dependency and he hates it. On the other hand examine your conscience to see what God (instead of another person) is thinking of you - pure Christian self-awareness. FK can't get redemption from other human beings so he affronts them. Father Zosima's (FZ) command to FK is to reveal

himself to God instead of trying to impress others.

You can't love Katerina Ivanovna (KI) because D always goes with inclination over affectation. D is Walter Scott in a madhouse. You can love Grushenka (G). D talks about things no one else talks about but which we recognize in everyone.

The tradition of elders - is D making it out to look like pious fraudulence? FZ looks ambiguous. D lists every kind of religious doubt.

Old Joseph Kennedy was the closest thing to FK in American life. And Kennedy's sons, too were weakened by his example.

Was D subject to 1) intellectual honesty / doubt 2) wanting to make others believe / fanatical belief? Deciding to believe against all evidence. It is striking that Smerdyakov (S) is the character who tells the first blasphemous stories.

D's anti-Semitism is something that must be considered.

October 15

(Defining and explaining the ways of God to man. This became a prevailing passion for authors on the 19th c. The formation of a national character and beliefs, too. There was even a sort of competition among intellectuals. The urban intellectual of indeterminate origin became a new type.) We take for granted the newness of the phenomenon of the intellectual. This type began to be seen in literature after the French Revolution, although Swift sensed it coming on. The intellectual plays a great role in D. (The intensity of the intellectual to work out all of the basic human questions, especially in the philosophical and religious realm.) Even DK feels like he has to position himself with respect to these questions, even though he is the most passionate character. He considers doctrines. (This kind of thinking has a form of doctrine to it.) All actions and all characters are at extremes. All are positioned around their responses to the most important questions. There is a thread around kinds of intellectual issues that Russian intellectuals were facing.

Is there any other novel where there is something comparable to the "Grand Inquisitor"(GI)? *By this was meant a story within a*

story which encapsulates the author's ideas. (Subtly in Don Quixote - Shakespeare combines different forms in his works, but he doesn't have that didactic element.) More importantly, it is not Shakespeare's thought which is being expressed by his characters, whereas in the GI D's thought **is** represented. (Mr. Grene: D had an extravagant passion for Dickens. These two authors had a sense of reality that just showed masses of detail and incident. There is no scrutinizing of taste, just the idea that there is truth.) There is this kind of honesty in Dickens, but Dickens is more like a mirror whereas D breaks the mirror to see what is behind it. There is a greater range of human types in Dickens and Shakespeare; D's characters all are within a limited range and are all mired in the same scene. There is no choice between types in D, all are different degrees of the same shameless type.

The most interesting characters are those most deeply caught in the abyss. This was a response to bourgeois life where there was no interior life. D's characters are private people against the bourgeois, but peddling a teaching. Abyss and ideology: a strange mixture in D, particularly in the GI. In D one has a consciousness for the **first time** that an author is ready for the horrors of the 20th c. (From the DIARY of D: Immortality is the highest idea. Without high ideas men cannot live. **Rational** plans for utopia will turn love of mankind into hatred and to despotism.)

Rationality is superficiality: this is the thrust of D. The most interesting characters express themselves in hysteria, not in reasonable terms. There is a mixture of repulsion and compulsion at the idea of evil in oneself. (This is a modern characteristic.) In reading the book there is a powerful feeling of looking into oneself and also of being propagandized. *Mr. Bloom said he felt compelled by D in so far as D calls his characters and readers back to relentless soul-searching, but repelled by the total, propagandistic rejection of reason in the book.* The possibility of the grand dignity of rationalism is knocked aside unequivocally. I like a more complete confrontation of things. I am, of the three of us, the one most committed to philosophy and rationalism, that's what Mr. Grene is pouting at.

(Mr. Bellow: It is betraying the book to sit there calm and pacific.) D is saying that it is delusion and superficiality to try to get out of Plato's cave. Rationalism is indifferent to nations which, according to D, provide the sap of the spirit. Socrates in Aristophanes has to have Athens pointed out to him on a map. This is charming to Mr. Bloom. This might be viewed as ruthless cosmopolitanism.

Tolstoy gives the reader a soft landing in the abyss. Tolstoy couldn't stand by watching a Frenchman get killed, but D could. Shows his harshness. Claims that there are nothing but tombstones in Europe. D longed his way back into being Russian and he required a kind of fanaticism to find his way back.

Commitments to what one knows are the only way to save oneself according to D. You need the negative (*sin, evil, suffering*) for any kind of vitality. Not simply believing the sources that tell us what is good - the good appears hollow. It is not clear, however, that faith can be reaffirmed. By looking into your own evil. Extremes of good and evil defined by Christianity. Allowing hate so that there can be self-overcoming. Because the Karamazovs have lowness in themselves, there is a vitality in them. Jesus is no challenge when no one hates. There must be an experience of the necessity of God for there to be goodness. And then, does God really exist? D is more doubtful than Augustine because D has seen more reason. Most men settled into a combination of socialism and Jesuitism. D says you must choose evil. Augustine says men do. Sin is the only source of revitalization. What do we make of FZ? Analysis of the vanity of elders.

In little ways, Father Zosima goes against the orderliness of self-abnegation. D does not accept him fully. Mr. Bloom has difficulty in accounting him a perfected saint. (Mr. Grene thinks FZ is a perfected saint.) FZ is one of the primary characters. Did D believe more in FZ? We forget the seedy sides of FZ.

To want God desperately, but to disbelieve - this is another theme. Dostoyevsky thinks of all of the objections to religion and this makes him a powerful theologian.

<u>October 22</u>

(In D, the reasoning part of us does not account for the most important of our actions.) But the Grand Inquisitor (GI) is not so clearly a tribute to Ivan's reason. He does not speak of himself essentially as a rationalist. He desires to believe but is incapable when confronted with the horrible cruelty in the world. Ivan describes himself as a rebelling believer; Miusov is the self-proclaimed rationalist. IK is angry at god for allowing cruelty. He argues that Christianity has failed at fulfilling the promise for a just world. But he is not a socialist either. His thinking leads him into a kind of nihilism. (An atheist on religious grounds?) Possibly. He is not presented as the rational atheist.

No profound rationalism exists for D. Christian delicacy had proceeded to result in the incapability of accepting the Christian God. The success of science and increasing civilization - this was the atmosphere of the death of God. A rationalist would say there is no God and go on living. A rationalist would not be in despair as Ivan is. His longing is clearly there. But IK doesn't endorse the GI, He is not impressed with his own cleverness.

(What does it mean for him to "turn back the ticket"?) He asks why God would create such a world. **If** there is a God. He is not on the side of the Inquisitor. Believing in miracles is a disposition of the soul. Socialism is the alternative disposition. This preoccupation with religion points to the fact that he is not simply a rationalist. Great Christian feeling has been denied its motive. (What does Christ's kiss for the GI mean?) Forgiveness of a certain kind of sinner. (The GI is suffering, too.) Maybe Christ is giving the Inquisitor approval? Go on as you have? This is not the Russian Church, remember, but Jesuitical rationalism that the GI reveals. The Russian has more of faith in God against one's reason. Christianity depends upon recognizing sin, but forgiving it. Alyosha's response in favor of executing the general who killed the young boy with his hunting dog is un-Christian.

The book reflects D's own sufferings. Ivan is a theological intellectual serious about belief. More complicated souls naturally apply their reason to the observation of the world and

see the conflicts. More simple souls just accept the world and God for creating it as He has. There is the possibility of the Christian intellectual hating the Enlightenment. Can one return to the punitive faith of the 15th century? Ivan wants God to exist, but can't believe. By contrast, a philosopher, all philosophers, don't want God to exist. *Mr. Bellow suggested there was irony in Ivan's rebellion.* IK is not ironical, his thoughts reflect a preoccupation with God's justice and existence. He detects the perversity in the construction of the world. He would have been a figure of ridicule to Voltaire, so he can't be called ironic.. He has a sense of the sacredness of life, but is testing the line of the sacredness of life. Shakespeare's murders are cleaner; you want to be king, but someone else is already, so you kill him.

Returning the ticket is a kind of suicide. Is it a shock that someone should question the existence of god? Ivan's is a hyper delicate sensibility. He is drawn into the desperate act of knowing Smerdyakov will kill his father. Why doesn't he blow the whistle on the murder? (Something in him wants his father killed.)

IK could see in old Europe the remnants (*tombstones*) of what people could do when they believed in something. In Russia, he says, they're all just talking. He is always full of anguish. His rejection of God is a real problem for him. He is a type of religious soul. D stacks the deck in favor of the soul that either believes or desires to believe. D is the writer closest to Nietzsche. This is Mr. Bloom's objection to D: there are no serious non-believers with a good conscience. How do we understand Ivan's rebellion?

God and sex are the two great themes. How ambiguous is FK's enjoyment of sex? Does he do it just to defy God - conditioned by a religious sense? Or is it competition with his sons? The novel is sex-obsessed but not sexy. Is sex in the novel an expression of vanity? Why does FK think G will come to him - grotesque as he is?

There are no politics in the book. Nobody's doing anything but struggling with the questions. No simple love in the book like what you find in Tolstoy. D seems to say that there is a certain kind of illusion in human love - a dead end, degrading

love. G is a prostitute, so this does not fit in with classical notions of a woman's virtue and love. The love of Dmitri and Grushenka is an anti-Romantic statement. Desire for possession and base sensuality. What is between DK and G? Their love is a kind of obsessiveness without beauty and virtue being a part of it.

The extreme ambiguity as to the nature of the good is a problem of our times. For old Christians, evil and good were clearly defined. This horror is constitutive of humanity. High and low are both a part of D's character. D is the founder of the school of sympathy for prostitutes, but Mr. Bloom has his doubts about whether this was a good gift. Bourgeois morality is hypocritical; D shows this by going beneath the sources of goodness.

Antony is an example of a character not preoccupied with the existence of God. The philosophers, too. Only constant longing and hysteria marks true souls in D. These are the only true human beings. Gentlemen, duels, romantics: these splendid human types are fakes for D. Shakespeare heroes would not fit in this world of D's. Shakespeare makes life into a choice of types. D's types are always perverse. D is himself always on the edge of the abyss. A peak of Enlightenment and Christian debunking of human pride. Devastating to modern man. The only thing men can have is longing. D has this cheap appeal: look at the worst part of yourself and you can be proud of yourself.

The pale criminal of Zarathustra: goes with Crime and Punishment. All that becomes good is thin because the world is so tame that only what appears to be evil contains the matter for real self-overcoming, as at the beginning of Christianity. D believed men must go to the sources of evil to lead a good life. Modern bourgeois man has nothing to overcome.

October 29

(Reading from FZ's life on the isolation of individuals.) D's remedy is in self-abnegation, loving mankind; is this appealing? He rejects the possibility of higher concerns in

individualism besides money and the body. Is this our notion of high humanity? Men become deadened to this isolation from others. All people now make "cases" for themselves - justifying their lives on some level. The combination of doubt and self-satisfaction. This other-worldly relation in D is not very American. The European bourgeois is our decent liberalism. Zosima, Ivan, and FK each articulate the isolation described by the murderer from FZ's youth. D is creating a world where serious people strive for what FZ describes in loving others. The great poet who created worlds is an alternative remedy to isolation. D does not consider this type. Mr. Bloom says that noble types can answer "no" to the question, "Is it a virtue to love your fellow man?"

Novels are a primary form of moral education. Of all novels, this one is a very compelling, fascinating mixture of humiliation and crime. The contrast of this with self-abnegation and universal love Mr. Bloom finds repulsive. D says we should be able to love all human beings because we are as debased as the most debased. There are superior humans and they should be told they are, according to Mr. Bloom, but D would disagree with this. His continuous sense of urgency is appealing - no easy choices. "Self-concept", a U of C term, means how you establish what you really are. D would say look at your lowest characteristics. Only those who accept their own nothingness are superior or true.

This is fanaticism. Only the committed are the ones to be in favor of. You're closer to God when the devil is working in you than when you're indifferent. (Like Miusov.) Political human beings and philosophers are by D dismissed because, according to him, they have pride of reason. He is a Christian critic of pride as human vanity. Does this seem right to us? Hegel is the opposite of Father Zosima as a human type. Hegel was a decent, sovereign human being, and knew it. Those who speak of the nothingness of human claims are superior in the novel; to D, Christianity is not the standard of nature.

Mr. Bloom would rather take a cruise to Bermuda with Socrates than with Father Zosima. Eros and agape. Do you think you ought to love everyone? I don't. People are lovable on the basis of their virtues - on what they do. Decent people are more lovable.

The proof of a Christian was to be able to do crazy things like embrace the low. Trans-evaluation of values. These ideas of D's, according to Mr. Bloom do injustice to people of greater value.

There is no friendship in this book. Augustine says friendship is anti-Christian. Classical gentleman were characterized by pride (Aristotelian). Thomas Aquinas could not reconcile this. Aquinas tried to combine classical and Christian virtues. Augustine called ancient virtues splendid vices. The ancient and Christian are both in condemnation of the bourgeois but in different ways. Tolstoy is more civilized, but not without his inclination to D. No Plutarch in D. Tolstoy criticizes it, but admits to its charm. These types are dismissed by D.

None of us has the same possibility for these types of attachments, we are "alone in the city". In a world where we have no place. (No Social Contract) These individuals in the novels of D and Tolstoy have a contract, but the Dostoevsky character considers the edges of the contract. Raskolnikov is clearly a superior man. Compares himself to Napoleon and Mohammed, but his own action is sordid, not grand.

Grand Inquisitor: improperly associated with totalitarianism which takes away democracy. You must choose Christianity freely, not for bread. An articulation of what modern man was thought to be coming to: miracle, mystery, authority. The GI is an inversion of Christianity. This is the closest D comes to talking about politics. No art of government in Christianity as opposed to Judaism and Islam. No political teaching in Christianity.

The animating principle in the book is in taking one's passions more seriously than used to be considered desirable in terms of light cast by Christianity. Needing God. D gives a cosmic sense to the passions which modern psychology seeks to reduce. Nietzsche's criticism of D would be to think that D's form of religiosity would lead to a reactionary return to older religions instead of to the new gods. There was extraordinary tension of soul in men of Nietzsche's time, but there was no object for their tension -"arrows of longing". There was a tendency to relax the bow. D is a testament to the importance of that tension. But that the earthly state could be infused with Christian spirit is a goal without a program.

The psychological phenomenon found in Captain Snegiryov (CS). CS is a characterization of D's amour propre: amour propre as the source of human misery carried to an extreme. The Captain, a poor nobody, dishonorably discharged, beaten in front of his son: these experiences are the core of his existence. In groveling he shows his authenticity. He lives in his plans for revenge. All other pleasures disappear in relation to this humiliation. Everybody in the book has a tortured, incompatible consciousness. And loving God is the remedy to not making others your judges. This is other directedness carried to a sublime level. This is what touches us. This is our salvation realizing this in ourselves. The murderer would return to FZ to kill him because FZ knows about his sin - *it's not punishment, but humiliation and judgment the man sees in Father Zosima's knowledge of his crime.* "You were never nearer death." This is a prime example of amour propre. Interest in murder is an interest in morality in D.

November 5

Part III, Book 7, Chapter 3 "The Onion". Page 343 of the Vintage edition. A clear, unencumbered representation of the psychology which motivates people in the book. Why does Grushenka want to see Alyosha? There's nothing so insulting as having someone forgive you. Alyosha is a walking denial of the motivations of money and lust and the pleasure for her is in putting him in his place. Her desire for him is not necessarily erotic. She wants to bring him down. She is in some kind of confusion. She is not satisfied with her sexual relations to men. She believes that he humiliates her: her eroticism has been corruption and she wants to bring him down. Confused: wants to be told that she's not a bad person, but she knows she is. She is caught up in other's opinions. Alyosha's is a test opinion. She wants his approval, but likes his purity as a standard. Katerina's relations, too are ones of vanity to men. Rakitin, too brings Alyosha to G to ruin him. Is Alyosha excited by her when she sits on his lap? Everybody in the book is testing everybody else. Her own love for the Pole is only her obsession with her

own humiliation. Mr. Bloom is attracted by the purity of the scene and impressed that there is no real pleasure in the book; it's always what the other person is thinking.

D doesn't want to find a sentimental level of goodness in people. There's no Levin here. Alyosha and FZ are the only ones outside of this dependence upon the opinions of others. Alyosha's resignation is to never judge or blame. This dependence on the opinion of others is the true human torment. It is possible that so much of human life is to understand if you are good or bad and to find judges of yourself. But D presents a quest for God as **the** judge. This psychology is a real search for something true. The love between DK and G is **not** a true working out of this on a human level. The book is not proposing that love on earth with another human being achieves this approval for the lovers. The characters' reflections on others verge on murder because approval is not accessible. Souls interlock through the demand for judgment. Murderous proclivities come out of terrible sensitivity to the movement of other people's souls and not being able to control them.

Grushenka is the only candidate for a fully-developed female character. Do we ever feel particularly inside the female character as opposed to the male? (Mr. Grene says you do feel inside the character of G.) Or are the female character only there to be reacted to? Grushenka is not represented by virtues until the onion scene. She has an interesting soul, but is unlike Anna Karenina who had truly extraordinary virtues and then fell. G is a calculating woman, living in a fantasy of reuniting with and/or having revenge upon the man who corrupted her. Her triumph over Katherina Ivanovna is from below and the humiliation she causes is ugly. She sees through KI, but uses it to her advantage in a repulsive way.

There was a discussion at this point of lovers and Mr. Bellow claimed that locers become more alike, like one being without individual maleness or femaleness. The idea that the ideal being is a combination of male and female is not in Tolstoy. The **unity** of the two is something great. A great writer, male or female, must have an understanding of man and woman, but lovers don't have to become more alike. Is the book a presentation of the male

opportunities? G perhaps just represents erotic love as just one of the alternatives. Whereas in Tolstoy, love is a great human possibility. The novel does show female dependence on a horrid world created by men. The most interesting resolution are in the heads of men in D. Mr. Bloom agrees with Birdiev (sp.? 1934) you don't get into the female character. To what extent is Mary mentioned in the book in relation to Jesus?

Mr. Grene asserts that there is a true love story between DK and G. This occurs in the inn only in the kind of recognition scene of her love for him.D is not a lustful writer. The union of DK and G is not satisfying. The sexual is part of a kind of human unity. Two people sharing their bodies and their souls is a great human possibility but this is not in D, it **is** in Tolstoy. There are no great families in the book. No courting. Marriage is not a great theme. Relations are beyond law and ritual. What is the real content of DK and G's relationship? Sex is only interesting to D when it's sinful and perverse. It doesn't lead the two to settle down. *Their affair is frustrated by the arrival of the police at the inn. They can't be alone together when he is imprisoned and then their love is poluted with jealousies. Their fate is uncertain. Dmitri's plan to move to America and back to Russia as American emigrants contains much future suffering for both characters.*

November 26

(The novel as a novel. The prosecutor's speech. Readers know the truth. Lawyers arguing evidence. We know the truth through art.) D is involved with issues that transcend aesthetics. His perspective makes aesthetics look petty. Is his writing connected with issues or with the aesthetic demands of writing a novel? (His truth must square with his art, he felt.)(Where does this take shape in the book?)(Puts the soul through a dramatic furnace in order to come to a conclusion which argues against Ivan's Grand Inquisitor and meets his criticism against Christianity. Has he managed to combine art and argument?) Somehow the vitality in acts of freedom and faith

shows that the GI does not have faith in faith, but not that the GI is refuted. The relation of the characters to God is more vital than is shown in the GI.

IK cannot bear the weight of self-consciousness - he is the most tormented, obsessed person in the novel. IK is full of doubts, a kind of unbearable nihilism, and has a continuous sense of guilt. DK has no sense of guilt. The GI is an attempt to get a resting point for a restless human being. There is no consolation for IK as opposed to his brothers: Alyosha has his faith and Dmitri his kind of love. Ivan is the one closest to D. D's highest aesthetic is honesty. The notion that honesty guarantees personality.

There is nothing here like Shakespeare's enormous pleasures. There is unremitting ugliness and doubt, but not without hope. His aesthetic is connected with real experiences he had. One of the most ambitious novels in covering essential human things that Mr. Bloom has ever read. An education for the Russian people.

(The kind of Christ he espouses and his view of human nature - an extreme view.) Mr. Bloom objects to the use of the word human **nature** - that is a base thing in D's thinking - only in the light of grace can human nature be elevated. Nature is the opposite of grace which is a gift and provides some hope of elevation. Hope and misery are related to the possibility of believing in God. "No God = everything is permitted" seems to be a simple-minded formulation.

D makes an exacting earth , but one which has nothing to recommend it. It becomes possible to live in it if you have grace/insight like Alyosha's. Freedom is not in reasoning through, but in electing and the the world takes on a different light. The truth of the soul cannot be represented in the court of law, it encompasses more. D plays God in some sense. There is lucidity in the action of the novel - only some ambiguity with respect to motivations.

There is no moment in DK's life where he is accused of being rational. No coherence to his life, but the coherence of the good-hearted. He has a kind of revelation, but in his test - he does not kill his father. Whereas S decides what he wants and does it.

How does Russian Christianity compare with British Christianity? In Jane Austen, religion seems just part of the institutional surroundings (Persuasion). Is D deeper, facing deeper issues? Christianity makes demands different from civil moralism - that's not facing the extreme demands of Christianity. Joyce in Ireland. tempered prudence disappears and the deeper longings of the soul emerge in D. The teaching: all human relations on that high level are failures - only when you recognize the emptiness of all of that can you forgive. Alyosha never gets involved in these things. From the moment Dmitri has the dream of the wee one all of those things become expectable - Siberia, that's the deepest level, in these conditions one can be happy. Recreation of the hermit's life.

With Tolstoy the characters do fit into a Russian national life, but with D he is overwhelmed with the individuality of the characters. No lovely peasants in D, but they share in the same vices. D makes up for it with the kids. No eidetic decency or true reconciliation of life. A peasant reveals to Levin what the real meaning of life is. In this Mr. Bloom prefers D. In the novels of the 19th c, French in particular, it was characteristic to show a world where Christianity could no longer have that inspiring quality. D responds that in Russia it is possible Christianity can still be an alternative. This is why art is less important. He is not like Flaubert claiming his art can take the place of Christianity. For D art is ministerial to something infinitely greater than art.

There is no elaboration in the Gospels of the same kind of taking the aspect of evil as in D. He rails against temptation but **presents** them. D less sure about the consolation of human fallenness that the Gospels. There is an eroticization of sin. A sense of doing what is sinful because it is forbidden and from that discovering something higher. There is nothing like this in the Bible, i.e., the charm of the forbidden. No lovely sensuality, no charm of this sort. Excitement that one's underlife is taken terribly seriously. Not the kind of book where you want to learn how to have a relationship with a woman. There is a healthiness to FZ, but you have to ask yourself if this is a weakness of his when so many of the other characters are seeing

devils.

D seems to have begun something of a kind of competition for the novelists who followed him. The competition among Romantics was to be the most high-minded, but D points toward authenticity and saying the worst. In the literature which follows Dostoyevsky we see an escalation of saying the most terrible things, but in D it was in light of what was good. That fell away. Celine was the best of these followers.

Ivan is Mr. Bloom's favorite character, Dmitri is Mr. Bellow's and Mr. Grene's. Christianity is not an ethics in the book, but has an ethical turn. Ordinary human virtues, classic virtues don't count very much in the novel. Mr. Bloom disagrees with D for this. This is an entirely new light in D: you don't forget how powerful the dark is. All human relations except those transformed by Christianity in D are manifestations of amour propre. Amour propre is the real key of human relations - there's no natural ground for friendship, etc. The ancient view was that this could be overcome naturally.